Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education
Request for Information (RFI): Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) Services

Updated: July 5, 2012

General Information about the RFI:
The Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) is seeking information for the purpose of learning about the services available to states in the process of designing and implementing a P-20W Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS).   The P-20W SLDS will house snapshot data from multiple agencies and organizations, with initial data provided from the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (EED), including snapshots from the state's K-12 database; data from ACPE relative to state and federal financial aid and FAFSA filers; data from the University of Alaska's Banner system; and data from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's (DLWD) UI database and GED database. The P-20W SLDS will include a data repository, a relational database or data systems for research and analysis, business intelligence tools, and a Web portal for publishing aggregated data and providing researcher access to data cubes or similar functionality.

This RFI is intended to solicit responses that will provide ACPE and its partnering agencies with information about options available to secure contractual support for the design and creation of a P-20W SLDS that meets Alaska's goals and needs. The intent of this RFI is to obtain enough information to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) to contract with a vendor or vendors to supply all or part of the services and products required, including those for the implementation and deployment of the SLDS, match, transferring and integrating data from partnering agencies into the SLDS, reporting and research services, infrastructure, training, deployment and governance support.

This document is not a solicitation for SLDS design or implementation services. ACPE management intends to use submitted responses as sources of information to identify the various options available to supplement staff activities and bring appropriate expertise to bear in the design and implementation of the state's SLDS. Any information provided in response to this RFI may, at ACPE's sole discretion, be incorporated into a future competitive solicitation for services issued by ACPE, in the event any such solicitation is issued.

Respondents may choose to address only portions of this RFI or the entire RFI; however, ACPE hopes respondents will consider all questions included in this RFI and provide any additional information believed necessary to allow ACPE to make informed decisions regarding how best contractual support can be deployed to design and implement the Alaska SLDS.   This RFI has been deliberately developed to encourage creative responses and proposals, rather than to communicate how ACPE wishes to accomplish the project. Obviously, certain assumptions about the SLDS' design were made in order to apply for the Institute of Education Sciences' 2012 SLDS grant. Respondents should feel free to offer suggestions for improvements to these assumptions and designs.

Please complete Attachment A of this RFI by submitting an electronic document or PDF file. As you complete Attachment A please clearly reference the specific portions of the RFI you are addressing and proposed solution components to which you are responding.

ACPE may contact the respondent to further discuss or clarify any information provided. Responses are to be provided for informational purposes only and at no obligation or cost to ACPE. All information

provided in response to this RFI shall become the property of ACPE upon receipt and will not be returned. Although ACPE does not have plans at this time to further disseminate information received in response to this RFI, all such information will become a matter of public record and may be requested by third parties under the Public Information Act.

ACPE does not intend to award a contract from this RFI, nor will ACPE be financially responsible for the preparation of responses to this RFI. This RFI is issued for the purpose of obtaining information pertaining to SLDS design and implementation services, and it may or may not be used to prepare a formal solicitation at a later date.

Introduction

In 2006, the State of Alaska's Department of Education & Early Development (EED) received funding from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) to create a K-12 statewide longitudinal data system, or SLDS. In 2011 the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE), acting on behalf of the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (EED), responded to the most recent IES SLDS RFA (http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/fy12_rfa.asp) and was awarded a grant in the amount of $4 million in order to combine data from the current K-12 SLDS with postsecondary and workforce data to create a P-20W SLDS. In addition, ACPE plans to provide $1.67 million in kind for the project, mainly in contributed personnel costs. Alaska's grant application (viewable at https://akadvantage.alaska.gov/SLDS.aspx) describes in detail Alaska's current situation, goals for the project, expected budget, and associated timelines.

The Alaska P-20W SLDS will initially link data from four partnering agencies – EED, ACPE, the University of Alaska (UA), and the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD). Within the first several years after its deployment, the SLDS is expected to include K-12 student demographics, program participation, assessments, performance, financial aid, and interventions; postsecondary enrollment, remediation, degrees, certificates and related success; teacher preparation, demographics, certification, and employment data; and information about students' future wages, their industry and occupation, employment location, among other data-related elements. As currently planned, the system will be maintained by ACPE and function under the direction of a multi-agency governance structure.

Since the results of this RFI may affect any future Request for Proposals (RFP), it is important that any responder to this RFI understands that this may be a unique opportunity to provide input that will guide ACPE's solicitation for a P-20W statewide longitudinal data system solution.

ACPE Organizational Information:
The Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) and the Alaska Student Loan Corporation (ASLC) are instrumentalities of the State of Alaska and are partner organizations with a combined mission to provide the citizens of the State of Alaska with access to the benefits of higher education at the lowest possible cost.

ACPE was created and funded by the Legislature in 1974 to centralize planning for higher education and administer financial aid programs. In 1987, ASLC was established by the Legislature to

fund the Commission's programs through tax-exempt bond sales. Repayments of principal and interest received from loan recipients go to the Corporation's accounts and are used to repay principal and interest on the outstanding bond debt and to replenish the education loan fund for future applicants.

ACPE is a state agency, offering financial aid and outreach products and services designed to increase Alaskans' access and success in higher education and training through five primary service areas:
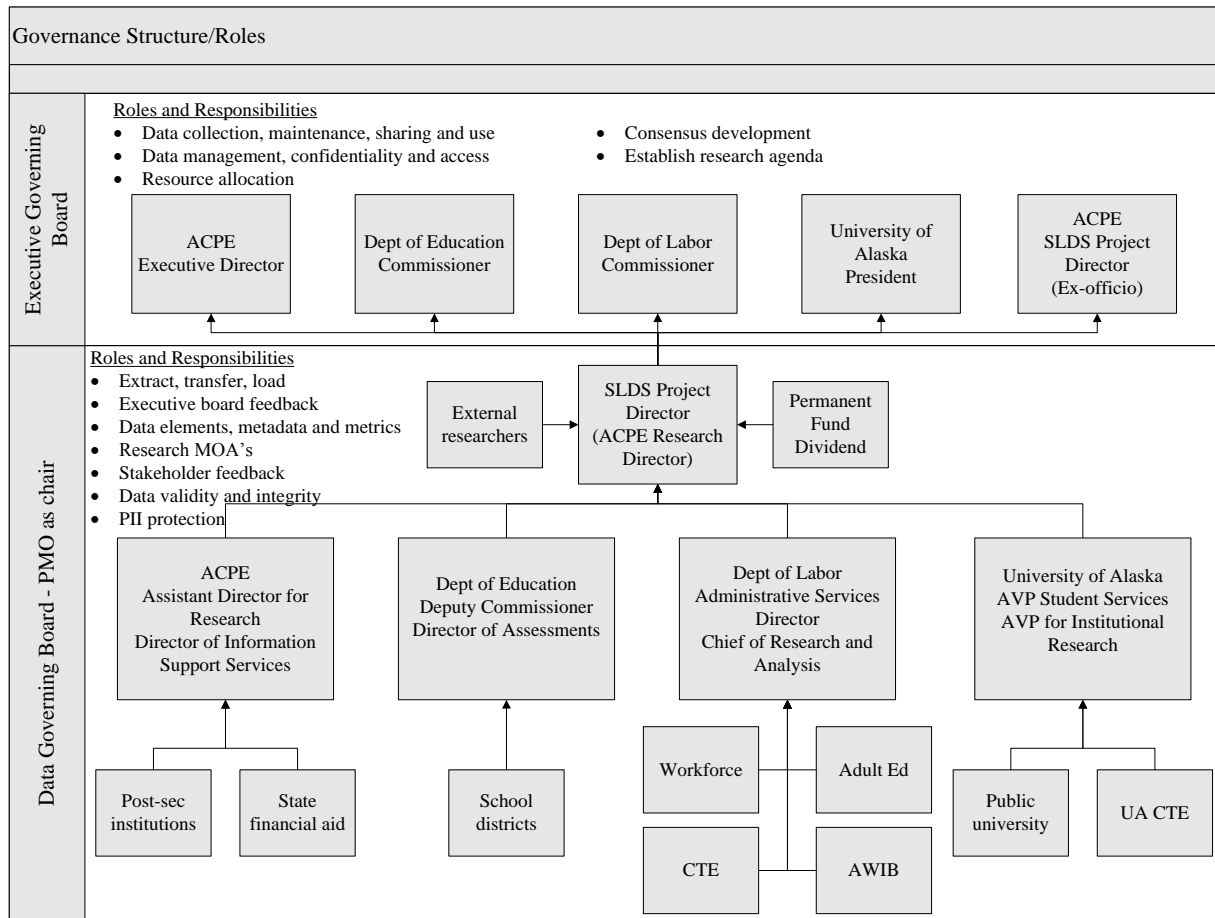- Outreach and early awareness
- Promotion of postsecondary education participation in Alaska
- Research and analysis
- Financial aid for postsecondary education and training
- Education consumer protection through institutional authorization and consumer complaint investigation

Background
ACPE and its partnering agencies have prepared for the creation of an Alaska P-20W SLDS since 2007. During that time, two retreats have been held, bringing together representatives from the four partnering agencies and school district representatives, as well as experts from the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE), the National Council of Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), and the National Center for Education Statistics' SLDS State Support Team to lead these discussions.   One of these retreats' many outcomes is Alaska's SLDS vision statement, which articulates the system's purpose as "Facilitate the state's ability to describe the outcomes of its investments in the education system, both in aggregate and at the student's level, and to identify opportunities to improve it while protecting individual privacy." Other outcomes included formulating strategic policy questions the system could answer, and proposing governance structures, data security, system design, data providers and users' identification, and data reporting. In addition a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) among the four data partners was developed and approved at each agency.

Alaska has already taken the next step to ensure K-12 and postsecondary data can be linked with workforce data. Through multiple Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), DOLWD has accessed individual-level data from EED and UA. These MOUs are separately negotiated between DOLWD and one or more other state agencies. Some have been in place for many years, while others are more recent. Originally, MOUs were developed to answer a discrete question or meet a specific reporting requirement. Recently developed MOUs have allowed for more open-ended arrangements without specific termination dates. Under these arrangements, DOLWD matches the other agencies' data to the Alaska Permanent Fund dividend (PFD) database (described below under **Alaska Data Systems**) and with its own data (usually the Unemployment Insurance database) to examine former students' experiences in the labor market. Match rates of resident students and workforce data are very high, generally exceeding 90%.

Relative to governance, Alaska Governor Sean Parnell issued Administrative Order 261 in 2011, directing the creation of an Education Data Sharing (EDS) team. Alaska's initially proposed governance structure is diagrammed below.

Governance Structure/Roles

Executive Governing Board

Roles and Responsibilities
- Data collection, maintenance, sharing and use
- Data management, confidentiality and access
- Resource allocation
- Consensus development
- Establish research agenda

ACPE Executive Director	Dept of Education Commissioner	Dept of Labor Commissioner	University of Alaska President	ACPE SLDS Project Director (Ex-officio)

Data Governing Board - PMO as chair

Roles and Responsibilities
- Extract, transfer, load
- Executive board feedback
- Data elements, metadata and metrics
- Research MOA's
- Stakeholder feedback
- Data validity and integrity
- PII protection

External researchers → SLDS Project Director (ACPE Research Director) ← Permanent Fund Dividend

ACPE Assistant Director for Research Director of Information Support Services	Dept of Education Deputy Commissioner Director of Assessments	Dept of Labor Administrative Services Director Chief of Research and Analysis	University of Alaska AVP Student Services AVP for Institutional Research
Post-sec institutions / State financial aid	School districts	Workforce / Adult Ed / CTE / AWIB	Public university / UA CTE

Goals and Objectives

This RFI solicits responses for specific recommended products and/or services to create a P-20W SLDS that meets the needs of Alaska's education stakeholders, while also fulfilling the project's deliverables as stated in Alaska's SLDS grant application.

The SLDS will contain information that can be used to answer a broad array of policy and research questions. Such information has already been used to determine what happens to students after they leave high school – whether they graduate or otherwise – and to analyze the populations of students receiving grants and scholarships. Because the information that will populate the SLDS currently exists in other stand-alone databases, the power of the SLDS is not in its ability to answer previously unanswerable questions. Rather, its power is in the ease with which these types of questions can be answered. At the same time, we must make sure that all information contained in the SLDS is secured and that any personally identifiable information on individuals is never inappropriately stored or released, so data security is a fundamental requirement.

The primary overarching goals of this project are to:

1) create a secure, statewide longitudinal data system that allows data about K-12 students, teachers, college students, and industry to be linked together accurately and securely so they

can be used to better understand and inform policy makers on the education to workforce cycle and on the personal and societal impacts related to education outcomes;
2) create reports, dashboards, and other information products including limited, tightly controlled access to de-identified unit record data that provide relevant and accurate information to the right people in easily usable formats to better inform research and policy making; provide support to help the data users better utilize the system to improve education and workforce outcomes in Alaska; and, increase transparency around educational outcomes, generally; and
3) develop a P-20W governance model with a team of leaders engaged in the practice of using data to inform decision making and who understand the value of this process for the state.

In order to do this, the project is divided into six phases, each with its own subset of deliverables:

1) planning for development of the system;
2) creating the SLDS hardware and software environment;
3) developing the longitudinal data system;
4) creating reports and a portal to make information available;
5) providing extended training to help users access and utilize the data to better inform policy and practice to improve educational and workforce outcomes; and
6) creating and implementing a sustainability plan.

It may be equally important to define what the Alaska SLDS is not. It is not:
1) A system that will provide transactional data reporting, i.e., the SLDS is not designed to answer questions about a specific student, to trigger individual interventions for students, nor to retain historical records that can be referred to in order to answer extremely specific, but non-research based questions.
2) A database that maintains information that will be used to evaluate individuals.
3) A publicly accessible database where anyone who desires can run queries and reports to access very specific information, such as information about a school, a teacher, or a course offering.
4) A database for tracking every Alaskan, or for capturing information on all aspects of their educational or workforce/economic activities.

Alaska's Current Data Systems
Alaska has multiple data systems within each of the four participating agencies (EED, ACPE, UA, and DOLWD) that will contribute data to this project. The Alaska SLDS will also make use of the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend records in order to match students to their SSN. These data systems will provide the information that will initially populate the Alaska SLDS.

Alaska state requirements include .Net and MS SQL for the technical platform, which would be hosted by the state's Enterprise Technology Services (ETS) on Windows-based servers. Systems using anything other than .Net and MS SQL would require a waiver from ETS. Waivers are typically available when there is documentation of a legitimate need to accomplish a technology goal that cannot be reasonably accomplished within the state standards.

EED's K-12 Data Systems
In FY06, EED received a $3.5 million award from the IES to build a K-12 statewide longitudinal data system known as the Online Alaska Student Information System OASIS. The deployment of OASIS accomplished several goals critical to the functionality of a P-20W statewide longitudinal data system. It

electronically eliminated barriers to district-level reporting and created statewide data snapshots. It also enhanced the state-level framework for collecting individually identifiable records for all public K-12 students by automating and establishing common protocols for the process

UA's and ACPE's Postsecondary Data Systems

As the context within which postsecondary data is proposed to be shared and governed within the Alaska P-20W SLDS, it is helpful to understand Alaska's higher education administrative and governance model. UA is the state's public higher education system. The institution is organized around three main administrative units, each of which has responsibilities for administering multiple satellite campuses spread across the state. UA data are managed through the system offices under the purview of the UA president's office, and the UA system enrolls approximately 95% of all postsecondary students in the state. UA's primary data system is SunGard's Banner.

UA's statewide office maintains access to individual-level records for all its enrollees. These records have been linked to K-12 data maintained by EED in order to respond to federal reporting requirements, such as for Perkins participants, and there have been other efforts to link student data with K-12, postsecondary and workforce data in order to better understand the education to laborforce pipeline. However, such linkages are difficult as the student information systems at UA and EED use different student identifiers, and EED does not capture students' SSNs, the primary variable for matching with UA and DOLWD data.

ACPE, funded by the Alaska Student Loan Corporation (ASLC), is an enterprise agency of the State of Alaska, charged in statute with administering student financial aid, licensing postsecondary institutions to operate in Alaska, research and analysis, and promoting access to and success in education and career training beyond high school. Alaska's State Higher Education Executive Officer role is shared between the ACPE executive director and the UA president.

ACPE, relative to its mission, maintains access to individual-level data specific to: state and federal education loan borrowers, state scholarship and grant recipients, and Institutional Student Informational Reports (ISIRs, which summarize FAFSA information) for Alaska residents and students attending Alaska postsecondary institutions; Alaska's authorized postsecondary institutions; and National Student Clearinghouse for Alaska high school graduates; as well as aggregate data on students receiving ACPE outreach services and interventions.

DOLWD's Workforce Data Systems

Labor data is the third component critical to meeting the state's data alignment goals. Alaska's DOLWD currently maintains several unique and confidential administrative data stores. As in most states, the primary workforce data source is historical unemployment insurance (UI) wage records. These wage records are maintained for most wage and salary workers in the state and contain the worker's employer, industry, place of work, and quarterly earnings, using the SSN as the unique individual identifier. In addition, DOLWD collects an employee's occupation, one of only a handful of states to do so. This information presents a unique opportunity to match a student's program of study to the occupation they eventually pursue, a powerful tool to track the efficacy and outcomes of various training programs. DOLWD is also responsible for training, testing, and certifying GED recipients in Alaska, and shares data with EED to identify those non-graduating secondary school students who go on to earn this equivalency certificate.

Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) Database

Like many other states, Alaska faces the problem of linking records across various databases without the benefit of a unique identifier. Matching via the more common administrative records – driver's license, FAFSA submittals, data-to-data comparisons, etc. – is an option in Alaska. However, the Alaska PFD database provides a large, broader-based data repository to match records across Alaska's data systems with incompatible identifiers. The PFD Division is a unit within the Alaska Department of Revenue, charged with administering annual payment of the state's PFD to all Alaska citizens since the early 1980s. To qualify for the PFD, Alaskans must apply annually, and the PFD database contains the name, date of birth, and address of every Alaskan who has ever applied for the dividend, and SSNs for nearly all applicants.

The PFD database is a rich source of information for matching individuals across disparate data systems, to validate identifying information such as name and date of birth, and to attach an SSN to records obtained from systems that do not capture them. For example, while EED does not collect SSNs, it does collect student names, birthdates, and information on the school the student attends. Matching those records with PFD data can then identify those students' SSNs, which can then be matched to UA, ACPE and DOLWD data.
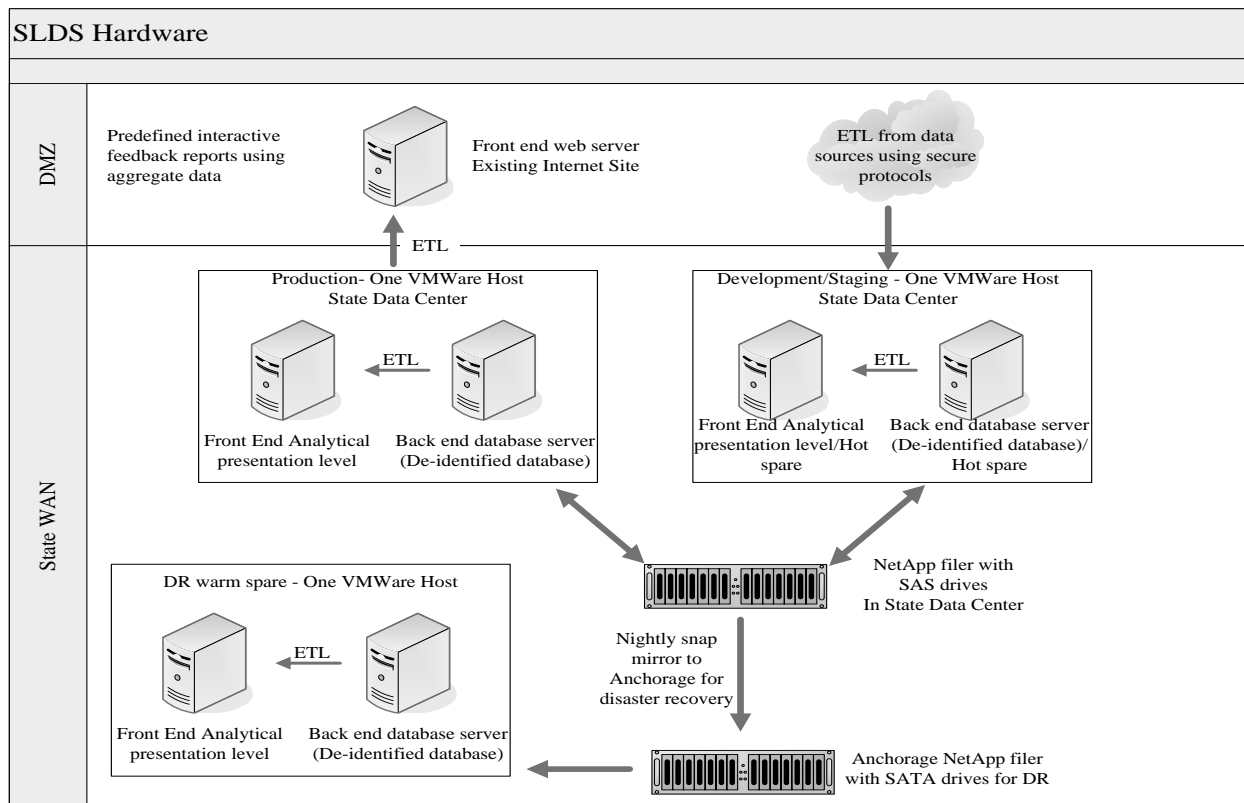
Potential Future Data Sources

Once the SLDS becomes operational, a new focus will become populating it with non-identifiable individual-level information from other agencies and organizations. This will require that the system be flexible and easily modified to accommodate such expansion. A non-exhaustive list of future partnering agencies and the types of information each would provide might include:
- Alaska Court System - Arrest and conviction records
- Dept of Corrections - Incarceration records
- Dept of Health and Social Services -
  - Public assistance use
  - Foster care and other interventions for children
- Dept of Fish and Game - Commercial fishing licenses, permits and harvest information
- U.S. Department of Defense
  - Military employment for Alaska students
  - Military dependent students attending schools in Alaska
- Dept of Administration - Division of Motor Vehicles
- Office of the Lieutenant Governor - Voter registration information
- Dept of Commerce, Community and Economic Development - Business and occupational licensing data
- Non-UA postsecondary institutions - Participation agreement with training providers

Proposed Requirements

As currently envisioned, an Alaska SLDS designed to meet the goals and objectives previously addressed will require integration of several systems. These include the following requirements, with associated hardware graphically depicted below. Please note that ACPE requires that all SLDS systems must be housed within the agency or within the State of Alaska's network system, so **no hosted systems will be considered**. A conceptual diagram of hardware needs envisioned to date follows.
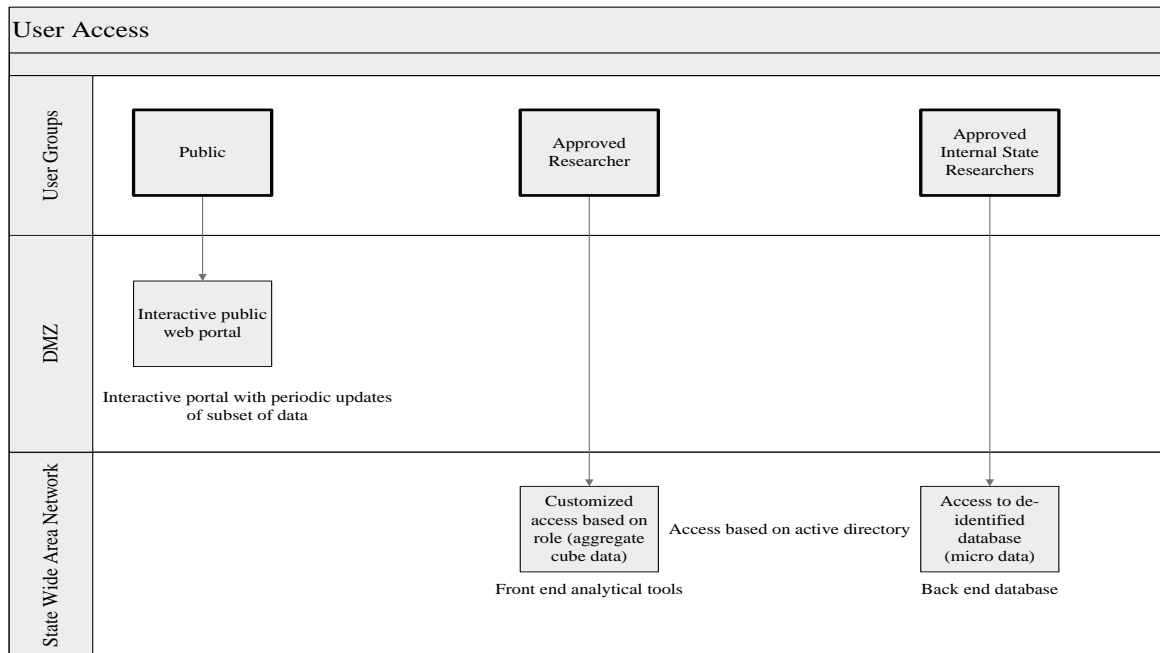
- **ETL (Extract, Transform, Load) Requirements**. The ability to securely load data from the four partners and load it into the data repository. This system will need to be flexible and scalable to allow new data and formats over time.
- **Staging and Testing Requirements**. A testing and staging process is needed to ensure that the data from the ETL process is accurate and correctly formatted. Testing will need to take place to ensure that data being loaded is what is expected and to ensure that the system is not corrupted.
- **Disaster Recovery Requirements.** An environment similar to the data repository that is physically housed in a separate area within the state is needed.
- **Data Repository Requirements**. The data repository needs to contain non-identifiable student-level data that can be used for research and analysis as well as functionality to allow the ability to identify a unique student on the non-identifiable database in order to load new information for that individual. It is currently envisioned that a student matching database will contain the cross reference from the various partner's systems identifiers to ensure accurate linkages.
  - Non Identifiable Data Base
    - Unit Level data, not personally identifiable
  - Matching Data Base
    - Unit Level Identifier cross reference
      - SSN
      - AKSID – EED's unique student identifier
      - UA Student Unique ID
    - Used to match incoming data to existing records

- **Reporting and Research Requirements**
  - Research Users
    - Approved internal state researchers with access to both non-identifiable and identifiable data
    - Approved researcher (external to the partnering agencies) with access to non-identifiable data
    - Agency access for answering state agency data questions
  - Reporting
    - Aggregated public information
      - "Cube" type business intelligence tool
      - Regular canned reports/dashboards
    - Ability to answer policy questions
    - Publication of public reports and dashboards

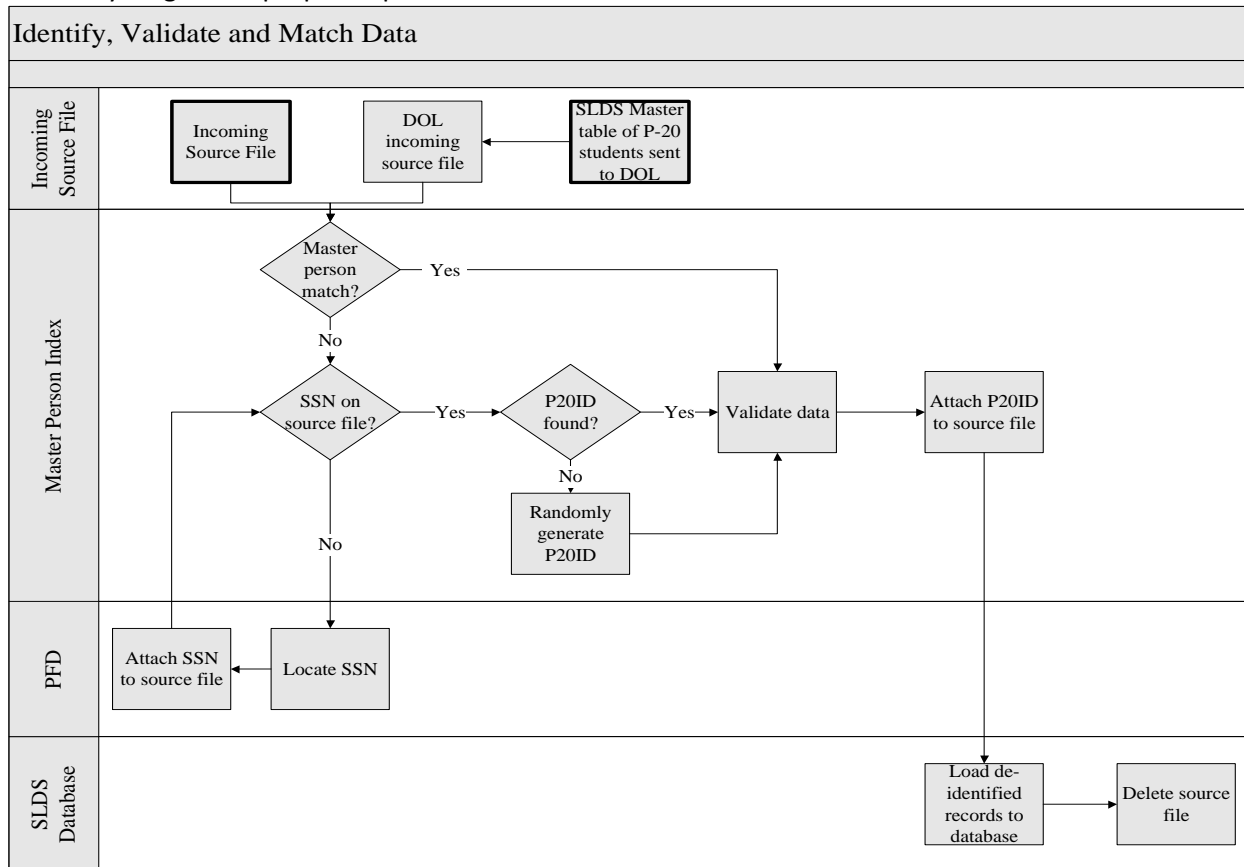## Proposed System Design Principles

Based upon the current systems in Alaska that will provide data to the SLDS, and the reporting requirements envisioned for the Alaska SLDS by the partnering agencies, the following recommendations were made with regards to the technical design of the system:

- The recommended SLDS design incorporates a separate, single data system housing core data elements (as opposed to linking information among several existing databases.)
- The system should store information at the individual's level of detail. With regards to educational data, this corresponds to student unit records, or the SUR level.
- SLDS data would be static in nature, allowing for more consistent reporting and increasing the opportunity to make meaningful comparisons of data trends over time.
- Data updates are proposed to occur based on the periodicity of the operational cycle of the source data provider. For example, postsecondary institutions utilizing a semester system might report fall enrollment data for a student after the institution's fall add/drop date, and

then provide final data for the fall semester after the end of the semester. Alternatively, worker wage data are reported quarterly, and because quarterly wages are reported retroactively, there is no change in them and therefore no need to update these records.

- Because the different agencies use different identifiers for individuals, student records must go through a matching process so that they may be accurately linked to other agencies' data. (See "Identify, Validate and Match Data" flow chart below.)

- It is recommended that multiple data elements be used for matching data. For example, EED student records do not include the student SSN. To determine the SSN (the proposed data element to use to match to a unique identifier), a student's name, gender, and date of birth would be matched to the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend records. By using multiple data elements, the chance of misidentifying a student is decreased. The elements used to make similar matches for data from other sources may differ, depending on the available source data.

- Once the data has been matched and a common identifier determined, the process to de-identify the data can begin. (The recommendation is that the SSN be used as the common identifier, since it is unique throughout the country and is captured by many of the current and future data providers to the SLDS.) Once the SLDS unique identifier is determined all PII, including SSN, is stripped from the data and the data is added to the SLDS system.

- Special research projects which have been approved by the Executive Governing Board and which require matching additional data to the SLDS would require the researcher to provide either an SSN or PII data (name, date of birth, etc.) for matching purposes, and any returned unit level data would be stripped of all PII and/or SSNs.

- Reporting protocols would be incorporated into the SLDS design. Such protocols would include minimum cell sizes for reporting purposes, with a recommendation that cells include an agreed upon minimum number of individuals before they would be reported. Functionality to sum small cell sizes to a reportable level would also be required.

- In addition, the use of secondary and complimentary suppression will be reviewed so that information on small populations or individuals could not be derived from reports.

- Absolute percentages, i.e., reporting that either 100% or 0% of a population shared a certain characteristic, would be excluded from reports.

Summary diagram of proposed process:

Identify, Validate and Match Data

Data Security

The partnering agencies proposed that the following measures be implemented to maintain data security:

Identify and meet all regulatory requirements of the various agencies providing data to the SLDS. Examples of such regulations include FERPA, HIPAA, APIPA, WRIS reporting requirements, and Alaska regulations regarding the release of wage and unemployment insurance records.

- Create protocols and procedures that appropriately limit access to the data, and ensure that reports generated from the SLDS cannot be manipulated to ascertain the identity of any person whose data was included in a report. This includes defining the minimum cell size to be reported, and suppressing additional data that might allow a person to derive information on an individual.
- "De-identify" data by removing PII from individual records, and assigning a unique identifier to each record for data matching purposes.
- Set policies and limits on the data that can be accessed by users at various levels in organizations (user roles) and monitor access so that roles are not being shared in violation of the governing boards' policies.
- Promote public awareness of the limitations that federal and state requirements set on data disclosure, including noting FERPA protections on any outward facing access to the SLDS data, and report on the uses of the SLDS data to maintain openness and transparency.

Identify and implement security protocols relative to personally identifiable information (PII) that work to insure its confidentiality. Such security would include, but not be limited to, the following efforts:

- Implement a tiered access with roles created that appropriately limit access to PII. (See "User Access" flow chart below.)
- The SLDS will reside behind a firewall, as will all processes that manipulate the data received from an agency in order to strip PII before loading the data into the SLDS.
- All data exchanges between the SLDS and the providing agency will be done in a secure manner.
- All data stored in the SLDS will have been de-identified, i.e., all PII will have been stripped from the records before they are loaded into the SLDS.
- The system design will accommodate changes that may be required to maintain data security, and periodic security audits will be performed.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

ACPE, in its SLDS grant application, proposed six broad areas of project deliverables, each corresponding to the six project phases as laid out in the Goals and Objectives section of this RFI. Each of these deliverables is addressed in more detail in the complete grant application (viewable at https://akadvantage.alaska.gov/SLDS.aspx), and ACPE would like your feedback and proposals as to how your company would address each deliverable, or offer alternatives that would provide similar SLDS functionality in an alternate and/or more efficient manner.

Deliverable 1. Project Planning and Preparation
In preparation for creation of a SLDS, Alaska's agencies have already begun tasks necessary to create a strong project management structure and successful SLDS, including creating a governance structure, evaluating existing data systems, developing cross-agency record matching processes, and identifying critical questions the SLDS can be used to answer. The Alaska partner agencies have already mapped out the project planning and preparation stage of the SLDS project to ensure the system meets stakeholders' expectations within all time, data, and budget constraints. This first deliverable will formalize that mapping and ensure ongoing project management through the completion of the SLDS project. Sub-deliverables for this project phase include:

1.1 Overall Project Plan
1.2 Project Mission Statement and Project Methodology
1.3 Develop and Deploy Governance Structure
1.4 Validate and Prioritize Critical Policy Questions
1.5 Analysis of State and Agency Needs for Reporting
1.6 Identify Business and Technical Requirements
1.7 Analysis of Existing Data Systems
1.8 Develop Data Models for the SLDS

Deliverable 2. Hardware Infrastructure
Alaska technical staff have conceptualized a hardware infrastructure for the SLDS robust enough to meet the expected demands upon the system, yet flexible enough to allow for future enhancements and expansion. It is understood this infrastructure may change during the planning phase as more

information is gathered. This conceptual infrastructure, however, allows staff to estimate the hardware and software costs expected to be required. Sub-deliverables for this project phase include:

       2.1 Procure, Install and Test Server Hardware and Software
       2.2 Procure, Install and Test the Networked Data Storage
       2.3 Install and Test Backup and Disaster Recovery Solution

Deliverable 3. Development
Throughout this process a formal project methodology will be utilized as discussed in deliverable 1.2 to ensure project deliverables, dependencies, and critical paths are identified and tracked. Emphasis will be placed on data security, data availability, and system performance, as well as the interaction between data sources. Specifically, each of the four data providers will provide snapshot data to the PMO, which will identify, match, and validate data.   At the Project Management Office, matched data will be assigned a P-20W SLDS identification number and be stripped of all other individually identifiable data. The de-identified data will populate the SLDS following appropriate data validity and integrity tests as developed during the ETL project phase, and the original snapshot files will be destroyed. Sub-deliverables for this project phase include:
       3.1 Create Extract, Transform and Load (ETL) Processes
       3.2 Create a Master Person Index (MPI) Record Matching Process
       3.3 Create and Populate the Database Environments

Deliverable 4. Data Reporting
Alaska initially envisions three ways of accessing data from the SLDS based on users' roles and access levels. (See User Access graphic above.)

The majority of SLDS access will be via an interactive web portal, accessible by the general public. These users will be able to access pre-defined interactive reports using aggregate data updated on a scheduled, standardized basis. The portal will be housed separately from the actual SLDS and will contain only de-identified data aggregated to levels that prevent the ability to infer identity or information about an individual. This level maximizes data accessibility, and generates reports accompanied by narrative and graphic presentations of these data in order to ensure users understand its meaning, while maintaining confidentiality through de-identification and aggregation of the underlying data.

The second method of data access is for researchers who have presented a specific research project that requires the use of SLDS data and is approved by the SLDS Executive Governing Board. Such access will be tightly controlled. SLDS technical staff may match data provided by an approved researcher with unit record data from the SLDS, and the researcher will then be able to perform queries on de-identified data under the guidance of SLDS staff and from within the state's Wide Area Network. Approved researchers will not be allowed to copy or transfer unit record data outside of the SLDS system, and all reported results would be sufficiently aggregated to not allow for the identification of any individuals. The results of the research using SLDS data would then be vetted in a SLDS governance group review process to ensure compliance with all data privacy requirements prior to publication.

The third method of access is for approved internal state researchers, normally staff of a partnering agency, and is similar to the access granted to approved researchers but with more flexibility. This access level requires the researcher to coordinate with SLDS staff to gain access to the de-identified unit

record database for specific purposes. This type of access will be carefully monitored and controlled by SLDS staff, and research proposals will require approval of the SLDS Executive Governing Board.

Sub-deliverables for this project phase include:

> 4.1 Determination and Development of Required Reports
> 4.2 Deployment of a Reporting Platform
> 4.3 Creation of a Data Portal

Deliverable 5. Training and Professional Development
Alaska will provide targeted training and professional development to facilitate, informed use of the Alaska SLDS by a variety of interested user groups. Related events and products will include development of additional information products to meet user needs during and beyond the grant period. This deliverable includes researching and assessing staff, stakeholder, and other public users' needs to identify the most efficient and effective training methods and materials for each training audience. Training will be delivered in a variety of formats to best meet the needs of as large and diverse an audience as possible, using technology whenever possible to maximize accessibility while minimizing delivery costs. Sub-deliverables for this project phase include:

> 5.1 Training Development for and by PMO
> 5.2 Training Development for Technical Manager and Staff
> 5.3 Training for State Researchers/Analysts
> 5.4 User Level Training for Approved Researchers
> 5.5 Web-Based Training for New General Public Users

Deliverable 6. Develop a Project Sustainability Plan
The last, but critical step in building the Alaska SLDS will be the development of a sustainability plan to ensure seamless operation after the grant. Planning for system sustainability has already started and will be a priority throughout the project development process. In this plan critical personnel and associated knowledge transfer needs will be identified for the continued maintenance, development and expansion of the system. Ongoing hardware and software costs will be identified for budgeting purposes. A communications and expansion plan will be included as part of this sustainability plan to ensure continued use and development of the SLDS.   This plan, along with all SLDS activities, decisions, policies and procedures will be fully documented and available to all stakeholders, including the public, with the exception of materials that might compromise security. Sub-deliverables for this project phase include:

> 6.1 Funding
> 6.2 Maintenance
> 6.3 Expansion
> 6.4 Review and Assessment

If your company would like to respond to this RFI, please follow the suggested format in **Attachment A** on the next page.

ATTACHMENT A
Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education
Request for Information
for a
P-20W Statewide Longitudinal Data System

I.   Response Information

If you would like to respond to this RFI, please do so no later than **3 PM AST on Monday, July 23, 2012**.
Responses should be sent electronically to adam.weed@alaska.gov. Please include, at a minimum, a
document or documents which include:

1.   A company profile.
2.   A description of experience providing services in support of SLDS and/or longitudinal data
     systems implementations, including:
     a.   Solutions provided to other states or entities functioning at a statewide level, with
          special emphasis on P-20W (as distinct from K-12) systems
     b.   Management staff experience and areas of expertise, as applicable to a SLDS project
     c.   A list of states currently contracting with for SLDS-related projects
3.   A summary "big picture" proposal or options for SLDS solutions.
4.   More detailed responses to specific questions which follow in this RFI.

II. Deliverables Approaches and Description

This section addresses the six project deliverables and associated sub-deliverables as proposed by ACPE,
your company's ability and potential desire to provide products and services to meet these deliverables,
and your suggestions on how to best meet them or to propose alternative approaches. You may use the
RFI Responses Spreadsheet or RFI Responses Document, available from the State of Alaska Notices page,
or you may provide the information in another format of your choice.

The responses for this section should document how your company would meet the requirements for
that specific deliverable and its component sub-deliverables, and may include a description and any
applicable diagrams or links to online resources to help us better understand your company's approach
to meet the deliverable requirements. Feel free to reference and submit other documents in your
responses if you use ACPE's spreadsheet, and to offer alternatives for our consideration and address
how your company would help ACPE create these alternatives.

More detailed descriptions of each of the proposed sub-deliverables are located in ACPE's 2012 SLDS
Grant Application (viewable at https://akadvantage.alaska.gov/SLDS.aspx). The six project deliverables
and related sub-deliverables are summarized beginning on page 12 of this RFI.

III.   Additional Questions for Respondents

In addition to the questions specific to the deliverables requested in the section above, please provide
us with some ideas as to how your company would assist ACPE in developing Alaska's SLDS. You may
use the third tab of the spreadsheet provided, or you may provide the following information in another
format of your choice.

1) Because Alaska is so far removed from many companies who may respond to this RFI, please describe how you would approach this project. The magnitude of the proposed SLDS project, its three-year duration, and the fact that Alaska presents certain logistical challenges for vendors (travel difficulties and expense, time zone differences, etc.) must all be addressed if there is to be a successful SLDS implementation. ACPE appreciates your company's experience working with similar projects, and would like your suggestions for the best approach to managing such a project. Areas to consider would include:
   a. project management strategies,
   b. change control and scope management strategies,
   c. communication strategies, with emphasis on mitigation of time zone issues
   d. staffing strategies, including remote or on-site staff deployment
   e. technical strategies,
   f. business intelligence strategies,
   g. stakeholder engagement strategies,
   h. training strategies,
   i. knowledge transfer strategies, from contractor staff to ACPE staff
   j. security strategies, and
   k. ensuring availability of sufficient resources.
   (Please note that ACPE will not consider any proposal for a hosted system.)
2) If commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) products or tools are included in your proposed solutions, please provide the following information for each. If multiple COTS products are suggested, please provide information for each product.
   a. Specific deliverable(s) or sub-deliverable(s) that the COTS product satisfies.
   b. Product name
   c. Brief product overview
   d. Primary product capabilities
   e. Supporting or optional capabilities (e.g., report scheduling, archiving)
3) If your proposed solutions include partial or total custom development of certain aspects of the SLDS, please provide the following information.
   a. Specific deliverable or sub-deliverable requiring custom development.
   b. Features not satisfied by any recommended COTS product(s) that may require custom development.
   c. The specific capabilities and functions for which you would propose custom development.
   d. The rationale for why custom development (versus COTS solution) would be required.
   e. A budgetary order of magnitude estimate for the custom development (non-binding, for information only.)
4) In your experience working with longitudinal data systems, what might you recommend relative to best practices to ensure the best outcome from Alaska's SLDS development plans?
5) After reviewing the Alaska 2012 SLDS grant application, are there any areas of it which you would suggest changing based on your firm's experience and suggested solutions?

Thank You for Your Assistance
After analysis, ACPE may invite parties deemed responsive to this RFI to submit more information, via additional documents, an audio conference, a Webcast, or a site visit, at the respondent's choice of communication mode. The cost of providing any additional information, including any travel costs should a respondent visit ACPE, must be borne by the respondent. It is not necessary to visit ACPE to

respond to this RFI, and whether a respondent chooses to visit ACPE will not be a factor in evaluating responses to this RFI or to any future RFP, should an RFP be issued.

An audio conference to walk through the Alaska SLDS grant application and to respond to questions arising from this RFI will be held at 10 AM AST (2:00 EST) on Monday, July 2, 2012. To participate in the audio conference, contact Adam Weed at adam.weed@alaska.gov or 907-465-6685.

Questions about the Alaska SLDS grant application and associated design and implementation, or about the RFI process, may also be addressed to Adam Weed at the email address or telephone number immediately above. Thank you for your responses.